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# For Reference

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N. D. MacDONALD.

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THE EFFECTS OF THE SCIENTIFIC POINT OF VIEW ON THE STUDY OF  
SCRIPTURE AND ON PREACHING.

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"The Effects of the Scientific Point of View on the Study  
of Scripture and on Preaching."  
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It is a fact worthy of notice, that although all nations and ages have had their religious books, no other volume has exerted so great an influence over the minds and hearts of men as the Bible. Since the time of Martin Luther this book has been regarded by Europeans, as a noble type of literature as well as a guide in matters of religion and morals. To a very great degree, the Anglo-Saxon race may be said to have derived its culture and its civilization from this single source.

So deeply has the Book implanted itself upon the life of our time, and so greatly has it influenced the best poets and singers, that scholars and people alike find it almost impossible to think in terms which are not in essential agreement with its principles of morality. In all ages, great men have turned to our Book of books as to the very spring of thought and inspiration. This particular Book gave Milton his "Paradise", it gave Handel his "Messiah", Titian his "Transfiguration" and Christopher Wren the plan of his cathedral. From the same great source, Cromwell <sup>obtained</sup> ~~got~~ his conception of liberty and Lincoln his "Golden" rule for meting out the same treatment to white and black alike.

If the Bible were taken out of the Cathedrals and Churches of Europe, taken out of the World's Songs and Sympathies, out of its laws and literatures, only the outer shell of civilization would remain. The Bible alone of all the books of the world has had a universal relationship to all ages and classes. It has made a vivid impression upon child life. Upon its pages poets have cast their eyes in joyful anticipation and they have not been disappointed. Many of the thoughts expressed in the Bible, lie like golden threads upon the pages of Macaulay and Burke. Orators and public speakers have quoted from it so freely, that we may in all fairness say that our most highly cultured men are those who have delved most deeply into the Scriptures. In our time the principles of morality enunciated in the Bible form the body and substance of modern law and jurisprudence. For many centuries it has been the Book used by patriots and reformers, it has been the book to which slaves

Definition



in their distress have turned, it has been the Book used by the common people struggling upward, and it has been the Book of hope in which many prodigals have found ~~the~~ comfort, joy, and sound advice. To the individual it reveals the value of each separate life. For the State it is a handbook of civilization.

Of late years the Bible has strangely enough, become a centre of storm and attack. The time was, when men read and revered it as if it were a book, which had come down directly from God. In certain quarters this reverence amounted almost to idolatry. A Scottish writer of the last century tells us, that his father after he had conducted evening worship used to place the Bible upon the doorstep in order to keep spooks away. Fortunately for us, the tendency to treat the Bible as an idolater treats his fetich has given <sup>place</sup> ~~faith~~ to a reverent faith and study. At the present time the Scriptures are passing through a period of transition. They are being weighed in the balance. They are being tested and tried. In other times attacks were made upon them, but never have the Sacred writings been subjected to such a severestest, as the one which is being applied to them at the present time. Never before as far as we are aware, have wit and scholarship been used against the Bible, with such skill and force, and never before have assaults of so bitter a nature been made against it from so many sides.

It is strange, but nevertheless true that the book which earlier generations valued so highly has become a centre around which a battle royal is being waged. Certain individuals have taken their stand upon one part of the volume, while others have undertaken to uphold another portion of it. As a result texts have been formed into missiles, and some of the most precious truths of Scripture have been formed into weapons of offence and defence. The history of the world proves to us we believe, that any instruments which tends to increase influence, wealth, and wisdom, has a tendency to engender war and strife. In every age, the palace stored with wealth and the treasure house filled with precious stones, have been the prizes for which men have struggled and died.

In the time of Pericles, Phidias and the members of his





school, toiled arduously to fill the Parthenon with the most precious specimens of Marble, that they could find. The great value of these treasures, engendered covetousness. In the fierce struggle which ensued the Parthenon became a veritable arsenal. The Athenians stationed on the inside used the blocks of marble as barricades. Behind these barricades they placed warriors fully accoutred. On the outside stood the Turks hurling missiles through the walls and roof. In a very short space of time, the beautiful and spacious Parthenon became a heap of ruins and the gallery a mass of blackened fragments. And as in an earlier time the Parthenon became an object of attack, so in our time the Bible has become an object of attack. All sects and parties, have gone to it for texts with which to buttress their positions. Errors in geology and astronomy have been found in the Book, and some have claimed that it contains mistakes in history and science and crude conceptions of morality.

Unfortunately, many of the discussions which have taken place in regard to the Bible have had a detrimental effect. They have destroyed the faith and confidence of large numbers of people. For a great many people, the Bible is as though it were not. During late years, however, there has been less heat manifested in the various controversies regarding the nature and authority of the Scriptures. The smoke is clearing away and the attempt to overthrow the Bible has met its Waterloo. If on the one hand, we must admit that the old view of verbal inspiration, that looked upon each Chapter, and verse, and word, as inspired by God, has been rendered untenable, we must on the other hand, admit that ~~the~~ reverent scholarship, meeting all assaults on their respective levels has established the authority and value of the Bible, as a book of conduct and character, and also as a book of God. We should ever remember, that the so-called attacks of men upon the Bible, ~~but~~ <sup>but</sup> have been, the attempts of scholars to clear away false conceptions, in order that the Book might speak for itself. The new views regarding the Scriptures, have brought the conviction that the Bible has only begun its work as an instrument in the regeneration of human life. At the present time, the Bible bids fair to go





down into the future as a light shining in a dark place. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, the hills perish in their places, "yea the mountain stream wearies the mountain heart as the crimson pulse does ours; and the natural force of the iron crag is abated in its appointed time like the strength of the sinews in a human old age;" the grass withereth, the hills perish, the mountains fall, but the word of our God standeth forever.

Evolution has done for time what Newton's "Principia" did for space. It has shown the Geologist the way in which a ball of fire became a home for man. It has shown the Astronomer the changes through which the planets, stars, sun and moon are now passing. It has shown Scientists, that all things which creep or walk or fly have come to their present condition through long periods of change and development. Evolution portrays man's rise and progress. It shows the various stages through which the human race has passed, up to the present time. Evolution shows us, how the forked stick has been replaced by the steam plow, how the language of signs has been exchanged for the language of the poets and philosophers, and how ignorance and vice, have in a large measure been supplanted by knowledge and morality. So great and manifold have been the changes, brought about by the theory of evolution in College and Church, that a very large number of the teachers and preachers of England and America, are using it, as the basis of <sup>the</sup> instruction which they give in both Church and Classroom. Evolution in the first place, gives us a large view of the method, plan, and aim of the Divine in the Universe. Those who accept the general theory of evolution secure a far larger sweep of the movements of God. In the second place, and as a result of the larger view which it gives of the method, plan and aim of God; evolution has led to a great extension and strengthening of the design argument. At first this did not appear to be true, but at this time the final gain can hardly be questioned or doubted. The <sup>increased</sup> ~~universal~~ power of the argument in the new form given by evolution is well illustrated by John Fiske's "The Destiny of Man". Man is here pictured even more obviously than before, as the crown and goal





of creation, and the whole development is seen to point forward to a moral and spiritual being, possessed of an endless capacity for growth. In the third place, evolution has made it easier for men to see the harmony which exists between the plan of God in the natural world and his plan in the Spiritual world, — To see that one great plan in reality, embraces both, that one master mind is working to a definite goal in the whole. In the fourth place, evolution tends to enlarge our conception of God in His immanence in the world. Theologians today rejoice in the larger and more ~~comprehensive~~ comprehensive view which evolution gives of the method, plan and aim of God in the Universe. They rejoice in the great extension and strengthening of the design argument, which it has brought about, in the harmony which it has shown to exist in the Universe, and in the enlarged conception of God in his immanence in the world, which it has brought to the minds of men.

As a result of the studies and investigations of eminent scholars, a great many misconceptions regarding the Bible have been removed. The most enlightened people of today no longer regard the Book as a single volume. They regard it rather, as a library in which the religious views and experiences of many peoples are brought together and bound into one volume for purposes of convenience. The Bible contains a great many parts and into its composition have entered the writings of many authors. In many cases these men lived in different periods, and as a result had particular difficulties and problems with which to contend. Between the writing of the first book of Moses and the writing of the last book of John, great changes took place, empires rose and fell and institutions waxed and waned, but during all these centuries and among many different peoples, conscience as the vice regent of God, did ever rebuke sin and praise integrity. The Sage and the Seer, the herdsman and the husbandman, the poet and the priest, all, bear witness to the foolishness of sin and the wisdom of right living. The Bible is, therefore, essentially a history of the rise and progress of ideas, right and wrong, as they began in Abraham and developed into their full strength and beauty and purity in the life of our Lord and Master. For those who are enlightened





the Bible is a record of what God has done, rather than a record of what God has said. It is not a book dealing with geology, nor a book dealing with astronomy, nor a book dealing with chemistry. He who is desirous of gaining knowledge regarding any of the sciences, must turn to the text books and treatises which deal with these subjects. The Bible is pre-eminently a book of morals and a book of religion. The moral element which is found in the Bible, is the bond which unites the various parts of it into what we call the Book of God. The moral element found in the various parts of the Scriptures, binds them together just as the sense of the beautiful has united in Westminster Abbey foundations and walls, towers and chapels, representing many different centuries and strangely divergent types of architecture; yet making but one edifice, which meets all the requirements and purposes of a noble and magnificent cathedral. The unity of the Bible is not the unity of a single song it is the unity of an oratorio or a symphony.

Each age must act as its own interpreter in spiritual matters. Each age possesses its own favorite analogies, illustrations and modes of conception and expression. Truths, if they are to have a vital place, in the life of any age must be stated in terms which are familiar to the people living at that particular time. This is not a sign of deterioration, it is a sign of progress; a sign of interest and life. The generation which is willing to accept a truth in the exact form in which its predecessor expressed it, is a generation for which that particular truth has no vital meaning. The truth which possesses value for any particular people is the truth which has been translated into the thought and language of that people. In a great many cases differences in statement point only to differences in temperament. Theology must advance as science advances, it must never become static, it must ever be dynamic. Each worker in the realm of theology may contribute something to the developing system of theological truth, and each one should welcome the contributions which others make. It should always be kept clearly in mind however, that it is not possible for any one to establish a final system of theology. The task of





the theologian is to make such contribution as he can, to the existing body of truth and to make real to his own generation the great abiding truths of Christianity. The task of the theologian is but a temporary one, as he very well knows. He realizes that in the nature of the case, his statement of the truth cannot be a final one. He is conscious of the fact that he is limited but he endeavours earnestly and faithfully to add something to the ever increasing body of theological truth.

Speaking now more especially of the problem of the Old Testament it may be said that the people who lived forty or fifty years ago had a dogmatic and legalistic theory regarding it. They firmly maintained that the Old Testament being a constituent part of the Bible, was the word of God in a very literal sense, and they as a result, regarded it as the only infallible rule of faith and practice. They regulated their faith, morals and views of science and history by its inspired statements. They spoke with assurance of the creation of the ~~world~~ earth in six days. They believed that God rested on the seventh day and hallowed it and they confidently affirmed that we all came from one pair of individuals who were created in knowledge, righteousness and holiness. They spoke with certainty regarding the fall of Adam, and held that all mankind sinned in him and fell with him in his first transgression. In our day the situation is vastly different. Men are more or less acutely conscious that there is something wrong. They claim that the old paths do not lead them to any definite goal. They find that the harmonies and analogies which formerly gave them so much joy and happiness, no longer do so. Many men feel that they are groping in the dark in matters of religion. They lack the confidence and conviction of those who have gone before. For the present unrest and uncertainty there is a reason and our present purpose is to attempt to find it.

The Christian Church received the Old Testament from the Jewish synagogue. Along with the books, the Church accepted the Jewish theory regarding them, and also the Jewish method of interpretation. The Jewish doctrine of scripture and method





of interpretation were not however, homogeneous. There was a  
a Palestinian method and also a Hellenistic doctrine and a Hellenistic  
method. The latter were developed chiefly by the Jews of  
Alexandria, who were <sup>well</sup> versed in philosophy. Of the Alexandrian  
school, Philo a contemporary of Jesus, was the great representative.  
Although he was a keen student of Greek philosophy, Philo was  
also a devoted Jew and a firm believer in the Old Testament, ~~He attempted~~  
<sup>in terms of his philosophy.</sup> This was a very difficult under-  
taking, because of the fact that the Old Testament is thoroughly  
Semitic and strictly unphilosophical. In spite of the many  
difficulties which confronted him Philo met with a certain measure  
of success. His success was largely due to his theory of  
inspiration, which he borrowed in the main from Plato, and to his  
theory of interpretation which he borrowed mainly from the Stoics.

Philo believed that inspiration consists in the ecstas<sup>s</sup>y or  
trance. While the individual is in this ecstatic condition  
his soul is absolutely passive, and his human qualities and  
characteristics are held in absolute abeyance. As long as  
the soul remains in this passive state it is able to receive  
that which the Spirit of God imparts. He who is so inspired  
receives at such a time words of truth directly from God.  
The Old Testament when viewed in this way, as the work of inspired  
prophets, is in the most literal sense of the term God's word.  
Each word is divine. This particular theory of the inspiration  
of the Old Testament gives to it an absolute and divine authority.  
With Philo's theory of inspiration goes his method of interpretation.  
Any one who has read the Old Testament, even in a superficial way,  
will readily admit <sup>that</sup> there are many things <sup>in it</sup> that cannot be taken  
literally. Even Philo admitted this fact. He asserted however,  
that those sections that could not be taken literally contained  
a hidden meaning, and he contended that the meaning of each passage  
could only be ascertained by means of the allegory. The honor,  
if there be any, of devising the allegorical method of interpre-  
tation does not belong to Philo. Previous to his time the  
Stoics had employed it in their interpretation of Homer. The  
allegorical method was the recognized way of interpreting sacred  
~~scripture~~ literature in the time of Philo. To us, living in  
the twentieth century, the allegorical method seems arbitrary.





To them it did not appear so. It was the necessary complement of the accepted theory of inspiration.

The Christian Fathers of the first and second centuries, were men who were Greek thinking and Greek speaking. It was quite natural therefore, for them to use the theories and methods of Philo, when they took over the Jewish Scriptures. It was by means of the accepted doctrine of inspiration and method of interpretation, which Philo had introduced, that the Fathers attempted to make the Old Testament intelligible to themselves and others. Philo's doctrine of inspiration, and method of interpretation served a double purpose. In the first place the Fathers, <sup>by employing them</sup> were able to satisfy their own particular needs, and in the second place they were enabled by means of them to meet the attacks of those who were opposed to them as teachers. The Fathers were opposed <sup>by</sup> ~~to~~ three groups of individuals. The first group <sup>was</sup> ~~were~~ composed of Jews. The Jews on the one hand emphasized the binding character of the law and on the other hand denied that Jesus was the Messiah, spoken of in the Old Testament. The Christian conscience found it very difficult to understand the ceremonial law of the time. The result was that the Fathers allegorized it in order to make the meaning clearer. In order to prove that Jesus was the Messiah, the Fathers referred to the wonderful agreement between prophecy and fulfilment. To them ~~prophecy~~ prophecy meant essentially the same as prediction. The early Fathers were ardent advocates of the Allegorical method of exegesis. This particular method ignored, to all intents and purposes, the real meaning of the prophecies and sought to interpret them apart from their contexts.

The Gentiles who formed the second group, denied the claim of Christianity to be a universal religion. They claimed that it was too recent to be universal. They stated, that a universal religion should date from the beginning of the world. In reply the Fathers said that Christianity was a universal religion and that it did date from the beginning of the world. They contended that the Old Testament began with the creation, and that it was a Christian book. In order to show that it was a Christian book, they employed the allegorical method of interpretation, by which way alone they claimed that its real meaning could be discovered.





In the third group were the Gnostics and other heretics. These individuals claimed that Christianity was not the oldest but the newest faith in the world. They regarded Christianity as something absolutely wonderful and unique, and they on that account refused to connect it with anything which had gone before. These men held a dualistic conception of the universe. They made a sharp distinction between the God of the Old Testament who formed the world with all its imperfections and the Absolute from whom proceeded Jesus of Nazareth. ~~One~~ <sup>we</sup> may quite truthfully say that these men made a more or less drastic criticism of the Old Testament. They distinguished between the God of the Old Testament and the Christ of the New Testament and they also drew a line of demarcation between the morals of the Old Testament and the morals of the New Testament.

In the course of time, other conflicts were waged, but in the end the Fathers were fairly successful in their attempt to prove that the God of the Old Testament was the God of the New, That the Messiah promised in the Old Testament was the Jesus of the New, and that the morals of the Old Testament were essentially the same as the morals of the New Testament. The Old Testament was now retained by the Christian Church as a constituent part of the Scriptures. Belief in its inspiration was now made a fixed dogma, and its authority was regarded as dogmatic and final. The Church Fathers achieved their victory by means of the allegorical method of interpretation. The position they established remained the Orthodox position until the time of the Reformation.

Philo's theory of inspiration and method of interpretation, are for us, wholly unsatisfactory. His theory of inspiration is in reality a depersonalized theory, and consequently a non-moral theory. It is in truth a great assumption and when we look into the Scriptures closely we find that the facts do not warrant the assumption. Philo's method of interpretation was a means employed to ascertain the real meaning, intended to be conveyed by the various passages of Scripture. He asserted that the meaning of the Old Testament was hidden beneath the surface of its words, and that the words when taken in their natural order, did not convey the real meaning. It is evident





from what has been said, that one using the allegorical method of interpretation could never tell when the correct meaning had been found.

For the Allegory as such, the Gnostic had no aversion. For him the New Testament was inspired in the same sense in which both Testaments were inspired for the Orthodox believer. The Gnostic held, that the New Testament had its own hidden meanings, and he felt <sup>that</sup> he was just as wellqualified to give the correct interpretation of <sup>the</sup> Scriptures by means of the allegory as were the members of the Orthodox school. In the case of Marcion the case was not the same as in the case of those of whom we have just spoken. He rejected allegorizing and advocated the acceptance of the literal sense of Scripture. Tertullian, a shrewd ~~and~~ lawyer of the time, saw that the allegory in itself was a weak instrument, when compared with the literal sense rendering of Marcion. In order that the power and authority of the Church might not be weakened, Tertullian asserted, that the only individuals who could correctly interpret passages of Scriptures were individuals who belonged to the Church. His contention was, that the Church alone was able to give the true meaning of Scripture. The truth, he stated, had been handed down from Christ and his Apostles by an unbroken line of Church dignitaries and officials. From the foregoing it can be plainly seen that the allegorical method of interpretation, which the early Church Fathers borrowed from Philo ultimately required the introduction of the authority of the Church, in ~~in~~ order to maintain its position of supremacy. From the time of Tertullian, the authority of Scripture, while still final, was more and more reduced to a subordinate position, while the Church with the Pope at its head became to all intents and purposes the ultimate authority.

The Reformation, while it was a very complex movement, had as one of its fundamental principles the reassertion of the Biblical form of Christianity, as opposed to the ~~the~~ ecclesiastical form. The great aim of the Reformers was to restore the Bible to its position of authority. They wished the Bible to possess a practical as well as a theoretical authority. The people were asked to depend directly upon God's word and not





upon the advice of priest and Pope. The Reformers saw very clearly that an unintelligible authority can have no practical influence. They saw also, that the Bible interpreted allegorically conveys no meaning to the ordinary mind. Luther, the great Reformation leader saw the fallacy of the contention of Tertullian. Luther stated that the Bible should be interpreted in its natural sense, that is, that it should be interpreted in the same way as any other book. The Reformers thus broke away from the Philonic and Patristic methods of interpreting the Scriptures.

At this point reference must be made to another great movement which influenced greatly the life of the time. This was Humanism. Humanism stirred the mind of Europe in the same way as the Reformation stirred its heart. As a result of the intellectual movement, known as Humanism, has come the modern world with its scientific interests, methods and achievements. Possibly the most important feature of the new scientific spirit was the awakened historic<sup>al</sup> interest. The historian deals primarily with documents. When he wishes to give an orderly and concise account of ancient life, he refers as often as he can to the records which belong to the particular period with which he is dealing. The method of interpretation used by the Reformers was used in a dogmatic and apologetic way, while the method of interpretation employed by the Humanists was used in a scientific way.

During the past two or three decades the term "Higher Criticism" has become exceedingly distasteful to a great many people. This is very unfortunate, because in nearly every case those who denounce it are individuals who have but a very slight knowledge of its purpose and scope. "Higher Criticism" may be defined as a careful historical and literary study of a book to determine its unity, Age, authorship, literary form and reliability." From the definition just given ~~we~~<sup>we</sup> can readily see that the Higher Criticism of a book is simply a painstaking study of the book, which is made in order to secure all the available knowledge concerning it. Higher Criticism has also been said to be "The consistent use of the reformation principle of interpretation in its humanistic formulation, that is as a scientific and not as a dogmatic method of interpretation." The Church has always been



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afraid of Higher Criticism, and it is almost needless to say, that this fear will remain as long as the dogmatic conception of Scripture is held. The Church fails to realize, that in its purity, the Higher Criticism of the Old Testament is merely an honest inductive study of the facts about the historical revelation of God, to determine the way in which God actually proceeded. The great controversies, which racked the Protestant Churches in the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, were due to the bitter antagonism which existed between those who held the dogmatic theory of Scripture and those who held the scientific theory of Scripture. Here it may be well to state that the two methods have nothing in common. One must ultimately be superseded by the other.

We must always remember however that whatever criticism may do, the Old Testament will always remain the one great book of Morality which antiquity has bequeathed us. The Old Testament is not merely a collection of moral aphorisms. It gives evidence everywhere of a developing moral sense. The Book deals primarily with character. Of all the ancient peoples, the Jews alone possessed the modern sense of sin and in this particular respect the Bible is the only ancient book which possesses a really modern tone. One writer has said that the gifted Greeks appear to be but mere children when compared with the sober Jews in spiritual matters. Lotze the philosopher says "that alone among all the religions of the world Judaism and Christianity stand out as predominantly ethical, the rest are all predominantly "cosmological."

This clear and constantly developing ethical tone to which reference has been made previously, is felt in all portions of the Old Testament. We feel it as we read the earliest race traditions. We also feel it as we peruse the records of events and as we read the poetry and the prophecies. This developing ethical tone, is the characteristic which distinguishes the Old Testament from all the other books of antiquity. This ethical tone cannot be accounted for by land or climate or race. There were other peoples who shared these things with the Jews and yet they were not able to develop in the same way as the children of Israel. In a peculiar sense God supported and directed this nation and this fact will always remain, no matter what the results of criticism may be.







The Bible we must always remember is the most important book of religion that has come down to us from antiquity. The ancient world had a great many books of religion but the Bible is for us the most important of them all. The writers of the Old Testament have been the world's great spiritual and religious leaders. The world has seen but one great connected historical development and we like to think that this development has reached its culmination in our twentieth century civilization. To this development the ancient world has made three great contributions. The Greeks have been our teachers in art, literature and philosophy. The Romans have instructed us in law and jurisprudence and the Hebrews have led the way in spiritual matters. One writer has said that "even in a higher degree than we owe art and literature to the Greeks, and law to the Romans, do we owe religion to the Jews. The Jews have given us the essential elements of religion. They alone, of all the ancient peoples possessed the highest God consciousness. The God whom they worshipped was a God of character and integrity. From the Jews there has come to us the only effective and thoroughly ethical monotheism. The children of Israel seem to have been the only people of the ancient world who were capable <sup>of</sup> that deep insight into the love and forgiveness of God which almost seems to anticipate Christianity. The very greatest of the other nations of the time were only able to grope blindly where the Israelites walked with confidence and assurance. When we compare the calm confident faith of the writer of the Twenty-third Psalm with the pathetic uncertain groping of Socrates we see how great were the attainments of the Jews in the realm of the spirit. Dr. Overton rightly says "The Biblical conception is separated from every other by its monotheistic basis, its unique clearness its organic unity, its moral character and its teleological aim. It does not matter for the purposes of this argument what dates we assign to the Books of the Old Testament in which these views are found, whether





we attribute them with the critics to the age of the prophets or to any other. These views are at least there, many centuries before the Christian age began, and they are found nowhere else than on the soil of Israel. This is the singular fact the critic has to face, and we cannot profess to wonder that impartially studying it, voices should be heard from the midst of the advanced school itself unhesitatingly declaring "Date your books when you will this religion is not explicable save on the hypothesis of Revelation".

In a very peculiar sense the Bible is the record on the one hand of the progressive seeking of men after God and on the other of the progressive self revelation of the Divine to men. The progressive seeking of the Hebrew prophets after God has many profitable lessons for the entire period of the growth of the kingdom of God. Of necessity, we must learn through others. We would indeed sustain a great loss were we to dispense with the writings of the prophets. The modern philosopher emphasizes the necessity of carefully studying the History of Philosophy and the theologian has an even greater reason for thoroughly acquainting himself with the ancient Men of God. Amos, Hosea, Isaiah and Jeremiah are worthy of a place in modern thought which has not as yet been accorded them even by the Church. We must depend upon the modern historical study of the Scriptures, to give these Hebrew Seers the place in our life and time which they so well deserve.

The Old Testament has value for us today not so much because it is a record of the progressive seeking of men after God, but largely because it is a record of God's self revelation to men. It is necessary for us to know and to be able to trace God's dealings with men. In this particular connection criticism has been a real help. In the older portion of our Bible we see the great value which was placed upon a <sup>pure</sup> ~~pure~~ unsullied character. We read of the intense earnestness of God in His work of redemption and of the great love and patience which He evinced as He guided the footsteps of His people ~~and~~ toward righteousness and Himself. The question of the actual self revelation of God in the life of Israel is of such great and





vital importance that it has called forth quite a long statement from Professor George Adam Smith. The statement is as follows:- "Israel's Monotheism became indisputable in the centuries from the eighth to the sixth B. C. the period of the great Assyrian invasions. Before the irresistible Assyrian advance the tribal gods of Syria - always identified with the stability of their peoples - went down one after another and history became reduced to a uniformity, analagous to that of nature in the Semitic desert. It was in meeting the problems which this state of affairs excited that the genius of Israel rose to the grasp of the world as a whole, and to faith in a Sovereign Providence. This Providence was not the military empire, that levelled the World; He was not any of the gods of Assyria. He was Israel's own tribal Deity who was known to the world, but as the God of the few hills on which His nation hardly maintained herself. Fallen she was as her neighbors, taunted, She was by them and by her adversaries to prove that Jehovah could save her any more than the gods of Hamath or Damascus or the Philistines had saved them; yet both on the eve of her fall and in her deepest abasement Israel affirmed that Jehovah reigned; that he was Lord of the hosts of heaven and earth, that Assyria was only a tool in His hand.

Why did Israel alone rise to this faith? Why did no other of the gods of the Assyrian clans, Baals and Molochs take advantage of the opportunity? Why should the people of Jehovah alone see a universal Providence in the disasters which they shared and ascribe it to Him? The answer to these questions is the beginning of Syria's supreme rank in the religious history of mankind. It is writ beyond all misreading in the prophets of the time and in the history of







Israel which preceded the prophets. To use their own phrase the prophets saw "Jehovah exalted in righteousness". And this was not their invention, it had been implicit in Israel's conception of Jehovah from a very early age. In what are confessedly ancient documents Jehovah is the cause of Israel's being of the union of their tribes of their coming to Palestine of their instinct to keep separate from other peoples even when they do not seem to have been conscious of a reason why. But from the first this influence upon them was ethical. It sifted the great body of custom and law, which was their common heritage with all other Semitic tribes; it added to this both mercy and justice, mitigating the cruelty of some laws, when innocent or untried life was in danger, but strenuously enforcing others where custom, greed and tyranny had introduced carelessness with regard to the most sacred interests of life. We may not always be sure of the dates of these laws but it is past all doubt that the ethical agent at work in them was at work in Israel from the beginning, and was the character the justice, the holiness of Jehovah. But at first it was not in law so much as in the events of the people's history that this character impressed them. They knew all along that he had found them, chosen them, brought them to the land, borne with them forgiven them, redeemed them in His love and in His pity, so that though it were true that no law had come to them from Him, the memory of all He had been to them, the influence of Himself in their history would have remained their distinction among the peoples. Even in that rude time, His grace had been mightier than His law. On such evidence we believe the assertion of the prophets that what had made Israel distinct from her kinsfolk and endowed her alone with the solution of the successive problems of history and with her morality was the knowledge of a real Being and intercourse with Him. This is what revelation means. Christianity itself needs this Old Testament revelation, for if Christ be the true and Supreme revelation of God and God is the same God we shall





inevitably argue that there must have been some similar previous revelation leading up to Christ. The Old Testament makes more, not less credible the Christian revelation. The culminating revelation in Christ, therefore, does not make unnecessary the earlier stages".

From the historical and literary criticism of the Old Testament the following gains chiefly of an intellectual nature may be noted. In the first place

Criticism relieves us of the burden of the false a priori theories of inspiration. The time will come when we shall be thankful that the patient critical study of the Bible has shown us that the Bible makes no such claims of errorless statement on all possible points as our a priori theories claimed for it. And furthermore we shall be guarded from serious misapprehensions regarding the real nature of the Bible that have led to its rejection by many. Attacks such as those which were made by Robert Ingersoll and others get their whole point from the assumptions of an a priori theory of what the Bible must be if it is to be a Divine revelation.

In the second place the literary criticism of the books of the Old Testament has removed a great many minor difficulties which must of necessity have attached themselves to the old hypothesis. As soon as people understand the ancient mode of composition, more especially that of the historical books and as soon as people understand that in the present form of a book we quite frequently have only the skilful weaving together of several accounts more or less parallel, phenomena quite inexplicable on the theory of a single authorship, will be easily accounted for and will cause no difficulty. By means of critical analysis, repetitions, lack of classification, minor inconsistencies, different styles and points of view are more easily explained. More serious difficulties also such as the relation of the Hexateuch to the other books of the Old Testament, more particularly the prophets are in a large measure overcome. One writer has said that the critical analysis of the Old Testament especially of the Hexateuch has helped historic credibility in two ways. In the first place it has done so, by showing as Professor Briggs says, that we have four parallel narratives

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instead of the single narrative of the traditional theory. In the second place it has done so by tracing these narratives to their sources in the more ancient documents buried in them.

If Christianity really rests upon a foundation which is Biblical, it need hardly be said that anything which brings us to a more perfect intellectual understanding, of the way in which it was produced will ultimately help us to employ it in the highest spiritual sense. Christianity is a religion to which rational men subscribe freely. It appeals to the whole man. The whole truth concerning the Bible, if it ever be ascertained, will increase rather than diminish the power of Christianity. We cannot pass over lightly the critical results which have already been obtained. The one great lesson of scientific research in every field is that no element of truth can be safely ignored. If Christianity be a Biblical religion, then it follows that it is impossible for us to know the Bible too well, from any point of view. It is beyond all reasonable doubt that the minute historical, and literary study of the Bible which has been occasioned by Higher Criticism, has greatly increased our knowledge of the phenomena of the Bible at very many points. It is not too much to say, that the difficulties of Higher Criticism would largely disappear if the members of the Church could be induced to make a careful inductive study of the Bible, book by book.

If one generation be more strongly marked than any of the preceding generations by the spirit of historical investigation, then in just the degree in which Christianity is historical should this generation be able to have a better appreciation of Christianity and a firmer grasp upon a historical presentation of the revelation of God, such as critical analysis has made possible. Men everywhere, are being moved by the critical spirit. In every case they desire to know what really happened. They desire to reproduce in every inquiry the actual historical setting. To our generation it is quite evident





that the greatest moral appeal must always come through persons. We realize very fully, that the one great road to character is not found by those who delight in intellectual formulizing nor is it found by those who revel in moralizing, it is found by those who earnestly endeavor to catch the spirit of the best. The appeal of the historical, the appeal of the real and the appeal of the personal, are all felt very keenly by our generation and their respective appeals are made stronger by the results of criticism. In our time the historical development of the revelation of God can be traced with a certainty which was never possible before. Before our minds, we can picture the actual historical situation in the various periods as no preceding age was able to do and because of this we can make the Bible more intensely personal than it has ever been previously. Our increased knowledge enables us to have a very clear conception of the precise situation which confronted Amos and Hosea. We can see their problems and trace their motives and we are drawn by the spirit of these ancient men in a way which is marvellous. Until recent times the prophecies of the Old Testament have been unintelligible to a great many people. Fortunately, critical study has thrown many rays of light upon a number of the dark places and as a result many of our misconceptions have been cleared away.

At this stage we may quite truthfully and fearlessly say that the historical interpretation of the Old Testament is the only possible one for the most enlightened people of our day.

The knowledge which Higher Criticism has brought us, enables us to know more certainly just what revelation meant to those to whom it first came. In the Old Testament we came into fellowship with the real God who created the world and who acts in the real course of history. This God of whom the older portion of our Bible speaks is not a dream God, an

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imaginary God or a God of mystic contemplation. He is the real God of real life. He is the God whom Israel discerned. The supreme task of the Old Testament is to quicken us by the faith and vision of God which the old seers had. They had limitations it is true, but in spite of these they enable us to see for ourselves in the History of Israel the presence of God.

The critical analysis of the Old Testament has produced the following positive results for theology. In the first place this exhaustive historical and literary study of the phenomena of the Bible, involved in Higher Criticism has brought out into clear prominence the one great purpose of the Bible, in absolute agreement with Paul's own clear statement, that it is neither science nor history but simply a record of the historical self revelation of God to a single people and thus to all men, looking always to the winning of men into a character like that of God. It must be borne in mind however that even in the historical books of the Bible the writers are not interested in strict scientific history, any more than in some other books they are interested in science. The Old Testament writers select only those incidents that can be used to illustrate some truth. They make no attempt to trace all the causal connections, their chief concern is to show what both nature and history mean for religion. They attempt to show how God reveals Himself in them. And because they devoted themselves to this one task, they cannot be designated the world's teachers in either science, history or law. They achieved their greatness in the realm of the spirit. In the second place the results of the critical analysis of the scriptures demand from us a much fuller recognition of the principle of progress in revelation. This progress can be seen in every part of the Old Testament, in the historical Divine leading, in the books of the prophets, and in the legislative codes and institutions and ideas of the people. To admit that there has been progress in revelation, implies that all earlier stages have been relatively imperfect and that Christ is the absolute and final standard both in the Bible and out of it. Frankly must we admit, that the moral and religious teachings of the Old Testament are not for us absolutely authoritative. As Christians





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we believe in a progressive revelation culminating in Christ, and Christ thus becomes for us our ultimate standard by which all that has gone before must be tested. We must candidly admit, that the perfect revelation of the Divine is not found in the earlier portions of the book. No part of the Old Testament was written in the full light of the Christian revelation and we must therefore judge this portion of the volume by the standard set up by Christ, if we are to make any appreciable progress towards truth. We do not for one moment wish to imply by the foregoing statement that we can dispense with the ancient scriptures. It must ever be borne in mind, that it is the principle of the progress of revelation which enables us to make the best use of the Old Testament.

In the third place, our more careful Biblical study has helped us to a more spiritual view of inspiration. We have come to realize that there is no mechanical unity in the Bible. The various writers show individual reflections of a religious experience, more or less common to them. Our modern Biblical study of the New Testament gives us the opinions of individual men concerning Christ. No one view, no single expression of the life of Christ can satisfy the deepest spiritual needs of all. The work of Christ is deeper and broader and nobler than any single account of it would lead us to believe. If this fact be recognized, there is hope not only of a reasonable freedom for theology, but of greater growth, as well as a better appreciation of the New Testament as a whole. What has been said regarding the New Testament in this particular respect is true also of the Old Testament but not to as great an extent. In the fourth place the newer historical view of the Bible, in the very nature of the case does not allow the theologian of today to use the scriptures in the same way as his predecessors used them. He must frankly admit that he does not feel free to place all portions of the Bible on the same level. The modern theologian has no use for proof texts in the old dogmatic sense. He realizes that the older systems with their vast numbers of proof texts had a tendency to be speculative. He prefers that which is really Biblical, to that which is superficially Biblical.





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In the fifth place Higher Criticism necessitates a re statement of the doctrine of inspiration because of the fact that the older views were a priori, not formed in full view of the actual phenomena of the Bible. An inductive study of the facts concerning the Bible is the only legitimate one for the thinking people of our time. The original revelation of God was manifested in His actual historical dealings with His people. When viewed in this way, the Bible is seen to be more strictly, a record of revelation rather than the primitive revelation itself. In every case the Biblical assumption is that the living God comes into vital contact with men of flesh and blood, living men. The meetings of God and men of which the scriptures speak involve no suppression of the human, but rather the fullest use of it. Dr. Matheson expresses it in the following words "Such is the leading idea of Christian inspiration - the growth of the Diving through the capacities of the human". The Bible is never satisfied with a purely mechanical result. The statement of the most absolute truth if it conveyed no meaning to the man who uttered it or if it had not grown out of the living experience of God, of those who heard it, <sup>is</sup> as far as the Bible is concerned a result of no importance. Manifestly, the aim is not to have certain words spoken or certain acts done, but to make godly and righteous men. In each case, God inspires the life and the individual speaks or writes out of this experience. This experience being peculiarly his own, is necessarily limited by the attainments he has already made. The steps of the Christian life, are never taken by God alone or by man alone, they are always taken by God and men together.

After his great confession Christ said to Peter "Blessed art thou Simon Bar Jonah for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee but My Father which is in Heaven". The context from which the foregoing statement is taken, seems to imply that in the case of Peter the revelation had been a growing one, growing upon him during the days of his close association with the Master and producing as the days went by a deepening conviction of the Messiahship of Jesus. And this revelation, it should be remembered did not clear his mind of a misconception regarding another very important point as the narrative very clearly indicates. It was not the desire of Christ to secure from Peter a mechanically errorless statement. His wish





was to bring the disciple to an honest personal following of Himself for what He in Himself was, and as the result of a clear conviction growing out of his own personal experience.

God began with the Children of Israel at the point where they were. Every revelation requires a response, if there be no response, there has not been a revelation. A revelation to possess value must impel man forward to grasp the truth given. God did not set aside the customs, forms of observance, and worship which the Children of Israel possessed in common with other members of the Semitic race. The people were permitted to retain them, but they were purified, given new motives and sanctions, and placed on a vastly different religious basis. This was true in the case of feasts, sacrifices, circumcision and laws. We are all aware that a growing revelation is only possible, in the case of a man whose mind is developing, and whose outlook upon life is widening. It is only by degrees, that a man comes into that experience of life out of which he can interpret the revelation which has been given him. This is very true in the case of children. It is a foolish policy which leads parents to anticipate the years, by telling their children beforehand the deeper things of life. Every revelation to be intelligible to men, must be couched in forms of human thought and language. It is absolutely impossible to avoid the human element, and even if it were possible to do so, the aim of all revelation - the growth of the man - would be left out. God's chief purpose is not the dictation of ideal propositions but the education of men. Men learn but slowly, but this does not disprove the statement that God is ever teaching them. In the earlier stages of the life of every nation imperfect conceptions of God and crude morals are found. This was true in the case of the Children of Israel, God's chosen people. For us, the Bible possesses authority not as a book, but as a revelation, not because it has been canonized, but because it contains the history of the life of the Redeemer and of our redemption.





This account of the life of the Redeemer, and of our redemption, its long preparation and development, has become more convincing and appealing, as a result of Historical Criticism. The Criticism of the Old Testament should bring it, manifestly closer to men, to life, and to history. In the course of time when scholars shall have gathered together the full results of the critical, historical, and literary study of the Old Testament we shall have in our possession an ordered and vivid conception of the progress of the Divine revelation, in all its parts, that will make the Old Testament more real, more rational, more personal, and more vital, than it has ever been before. This new conception will in the process of time secure a constantly deepening hold, upon the imagination, heart, and life. In view of the great progress, which has already been made, we may confidently hope that the best teaching and the best preaching of the great truths of the Bible, that the world has ever seen, have yet to be witnessed.

The following gains accrue from such a conception of the inspiration of the Bible. In the first place it agrees with the highest Christian conceptions of the relation of God and men. In the second place it makes even more real, the Divine element in the Bible affirming on increasingly clear historical grounds, the objective reality of a unique Divine revelation to Israel, and accepting the testimony of the prophetic consciousness as scientifically trustworthy. In the third place this particular view of inspiration does not in the slightest degree evade the full human element. And furthermore, it is capable of bringing it, into its conception even when plainly wrong. In the fourth place such a view of inspiration brings harmony into all the methods of God. It regards them as progressive and adaptive. It brings the methods of God in the Old Testament into essential agreement with His method in the New Testament and at the present time, and gives us a conception, in which we may rest as justified, in the presence of all the facts. Undoubtedly, the time will come, when we shall be grateful that the phenomena of the Bible as ascertained by patient study, compelled us to revise our statement of the doctrine of inspiration, and to eliminate from it that which was mechanical.

To us, who are living in the twentieth century, the Old Testament reveals the following thoughts. In the first place it indicates to us with growing clearness the consciousness of God as one holy, personal, Being, the righteous Creator, and Controller of the universe. It is a task which is intensely interesting, to trace the growth of this







faith from the time when Moses declared to his people that Jehovah in His grace and pity had chosen them for Himself, to the time when the final results of that choice were disclosed to the world. Our acquaintance with the Old Testament has taught us, the truth of the following statement found in the Jewish prayer book. "He is One and there is no second to compare to Him, to consort with Him; without beginning, without end, to Him belong strength and dominion - and He is my God - my Redeemer liveth; and a rock in my travail, in time of distress, and He is my banner and my refuge - the portion of my cup on the day when I call." In the second place the Old Testament has given us the true meaning of holiness. In tracing out this idea, we of necessity have a long and intricate story to unravel. We pass through the stage where a man is regarded not as a person but as an appendage to some one else, the subject to the ruler, the child to the father, the wife to the husband, the slave to the master. We observe the time when no clear line was drawn between the ritual and the moral. We read of things done in the name of God, by those who thought that they had His warrant for their actions, which we today following the example of Christ condemn as belonging to an age of darkness and hardness of heart. We must not however be unmindful of the fact, that those who knew Him best, declared that His real demands were for uprightness of character and brotherly kindness. Amos proclaimed God's judgment against the surrounding nations for crimes against common humanity. <sup>and</sup> Israel entreated for justice for the poor and helpless, Jeremiah had a very deep sense of the origin of evil in the heart and its need of cleansing and the Psalmists saw very clearly that Jehovah desired truth in the inward parts. From the Old Testament, we learn that religion and morality are inseparably bound together. For us, today the prophets' summary of duty "to do justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with thy God" is our ideal and goal.

In the third place we find in the Old Testament scriptures the growing sense of need, that Jehovah Himself should intervene and raise men up to ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> fellowship with Himself for which they had been created and which no sacrifices, ritual or personal endeavors had been able to secure for them. The "Messianic Hope" of the Old Testament is seen in the yearnings for the righteous King of David's line; it is seen in Jeremiah's vision of the time when God's law should be written on the tables of the heart and all people should know Him. This longing was















Jesus at His coming introduced the rule of love and forgiveness. The older scriptures distinguish very clearly between clean and unclean foods and lay down particular laws for the guidance of the people. Jesus brushed these aside, and taught the people that defilement comes from within and not from without. Jesus realized very clearly, that a great deal of the Old Testament had its origin in very primitive times. He ever turned away from details, and bade His hearers search for the deeper principles with which the Old Testament abounds. Paul like Christ brushed aside the ritual law and prided himself on his freedom from it. He like his master looked for the spirit and not for the letter.

The modern preacher in order to be successful must follow in the footsteps of Christ. He must emphasize principles. He must interpret for his people the great fundamental verities of the spirit, and he must endeavor to enthuse them with the spirit of the ancient seers of Israel. The tendency today is to stress the great truths of life, rather than the various shades of meaning which various words may possess. The task of the minister is to apply to the life of his time the principles which raise men to higher and nobler things. In his treatment of the Old and New Testaments, he should be fair and just. His knowledge of the scriptures should be accurate and scientific, and his constant aim in life should be to educate his hearers in the matters of the spirit. To all people a universal and not a local view of life should be given and to this great work of training and instructing people, the minister is called in no uncertain tone. He must be a man of wide sympathies and clear intellect, a leader of men.





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